

## **Christmas 1985** by **carrymehome**

**Category:** Stranger Things, 2016

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Eleven/Jane H., Mike W.

**Pairings:** Eleven/Jane H./Mike W.

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2018-12-31 16:49:10

**Updated:** 2018-12-31 16:49:10

**Packaged:** 2019-12-12 19:59:12

**Rating:** T

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 3,878

**Publisher:** [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

**Summary:** A slightly late Christmas one-shot with all the fluff you can possibly stand.

## Christmas 1985

**A/N I had every intention of publishing this before Christmas. Or at least on Christmas, but no such luck. Instead, I give you a Christmas one-shot with Mileven fluffly goodness as a New Year's present.**

Her first real Christmas had been in 1984, not long after the Snow Ball. December 1983 was a blur and Hopper was much too worried about government agents and frostbite to worry about a holiday Eleven didn't even know existed. But the next year, Hopper set her up with a small tree and put a few brightly wrapped gifts under it. She watched the same cartoon Christmas specials that Sara used to watch, and much like re-reading *Anne of Green Gables*, Hopper found he was able to revisit those memories with Eleven without reopening old wounds too much. He considered telling her that Santa was really real, thinking about the pure joy Sara got from sincerely believing. But then he realized that someone breaking in the house, even for the purpose of bringing her presents, was the stuff of nightmares not magic for Eleven. "It's a game," he told her. "A pretending game kind of like the boys and their dragon book."

"*Dungeons and Dragons*," she corrected him earnestly.

"Sure, kid," he was willing to humor her, though to him it was a meaningless distinction.

For a first Christmas, it had been nice and Eleven had nothing to compare it to in any case. But Christmas 1985 was her first Christmas out of hiding and Mike was hell bent on making it special from beginning to end which meant hounding Hopper starting immediately after Thanksgiving.

It began with a box of Christmas decorations. A very large box of Christmas decorations.

"Jonathan," Hopper complained, "why do you drive him over here with this stuff? If you made him ride his bike, he couldn't carry this much crap."

Jonathan just shrugged and gave an ambiguous, "It's Christmas," by way of a non-answer. Jonathan wasn't really opposed to Hopper and Joyce rekindling their relationship, but it didn't stop him from getting in his little passive aggressive digs here and there. He couldn't make it too easy, after all.

"We'll need a big tree," Eleven decided looking with wide eyes at the ridiculous number of ornaments she was going to need a place for.

"Tell you what," Hopper told Mike and Eleven, thinking he'd outsmarted them, "you can have as big of a tree as you can cut down and bring back here." He handed them a hatchet that hadn't been sharpened since the last round of firewood cutting and ushered them out the door.

There was a thin layer of snow covering the gravel driveway that had partially melted and refrozen resulting in a loud crunching as they walked towards the woods, hatchet in hand.

"If we walk around the lake that way, there's some pine trees not too far away," Mike pointed out a small stand of modest trees that weren't too far from the trailer. Eleven, of course, had bigger plans.

"But there are better trees if we walk this way."

"Better but bigger and therefore heavier trees that are also further away," he argued.

She stared at him with raised eyebrows and a glint of mischief waiting for him to catch on.

"You know Hopper will freak out if you use your powers to drag a Christmas tree home."

"I won't *just* use powers. Powers will only make it easier."

Mike knew it was a bad idea, but he also knew he wasn't going to talk her out of it, so they walked around the lake the long way towards the larger pine trees as Mike envisioned a lifetime of getting talked into ill advised plans simply because he couldn't tell Eleven no. There were clearly worse fates to be had.

"Do you know what you want for Christmas?" Mike asked her as they trudged through the snow, trying not to be too obvious that he was fishing for gift ideas. The snow itself wasn't that deep, but the marshy grass surrounding the lake made for uneven walking.

"I don't need anything," Eleven told him. Hopper didn't spoil Eleven, but she was well taken care of. And considering her past, she had pretty low standards. "What do most people get for Christmas?"

"Um, well, anything. Nancy usually gets clothes. Holly gets toys. I usually ask for books and video games and stuff."

"I have clothes and books. I'm not good at video games. And I don't really need toys."

"What do you *want*? It doesn't have to be something you need, just something that would make you happy," he prompted.

She thought for awhile, making her way along the lake's edge. Finally she told him, "You make me happy. I want you for Christmas."

Mike blushed at the ease and honesty of her admission. "You can't have a person as a Christmas present. And besides which, I'm not going anywhere. Christmas present or not, you've got me."

Eleven planted a feather light kiss on his chapped lips. "Then I don't want anything. Just you. And this tree." She eyed a shapely pine that was about a foot taller than Mike.

The dull hatchet was as difficult to wield as Hopper had hoped it would be. It didn't deter Eleven because she was a singularly stubborn human being, but it did cause both El and Mike to form blisters on their hands before they even started dragging the tree back to the trailer.

True to her word Eleven only used her powers to help, not to do all the work. If anyone bothered to watch them, it was obvious that Mike and Eleven were struggling to drag the tree along behind them, wending their way through clumps of frozen grass and iced over snow. When they finally dragged it up the steps, they were sweaty and red faced enough that Hopper didn't accuse El outright of using

her powers (though he did stare dubious at her nose a little longer than necessary looking for traces of blood).

.

.

The week after Thanksgiving break, Mike walked into the Hawkins Police Station after school and caught the tail end of what sounded like a list of phone messages being recited by his middle aged secretary. "...and the minister at the Lutheran Church is upset. Someone stole pieces of their Christmas display again."

"*Already?* I swear this shit starts earlier every year. You know if he'd just fasten that thing down, it wouldn't be so easy to steal."

"You want me to call the minister and tell him your official advice is to nail the baby Jesus to the the manger?" she deadpanned.

"I never said *nail* it," Hopper volleyed back amid the snickers of fellow officers. "Screws would hold up better in the weather."

Flo finally caught sight of Mike standing at the front counter. "Hello dear, can I help you?"

"I was just hoping to see Chief Hopper," Mike responded. Hopper recognized his voice and immediately started the mental catalog of worst case scenarios.

"Alright Mike, come on back," Hopper gestured to the hallway leading to his office. The second the door was closed, Hopper anxiously demanded, "What's wrong?" at the exact same time Mike told him "Don't worry, nothing's wrong!"

Hopper opted to lean against the edge of his desk rather than sit in his chair. "Ok then, if nothing's wrong, what are you doing here?"

"My mom is going to take us to see the Nutcracker in Indianapolis," Mike explained.

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"She said I could bring El if it's ok with you," Mike continued as though Hopper had said nothing. "I thought it would be a fun surprise for her."

"Indianapolis?"

"Yeah. And I know, it's a risk for her to go to a whole other city, but it's not like she hasn't done it before."

"That's a really bad argument, you know that right?" Hopper glared at him, Eleven's wanderings still something of a sore spot.

"Oh come on, it's been quiet. I promise we'll call you if anything suspicious happens."

Hopper thought for awhile, mostly attempting to find a reason to say no rather than a reason to say yes. "Your sister going?"

"Both of them," Mike responded even though he knew Hopper was not asking about Holly.

"Alright," he finally allowed, "but you'd better call me if anything happens, got it?"

"Got it. Thanks, Hopper."

"Yeah, well, better you than me, I guess."

Hopper bought Eleven a red and green plaid Christmas dress complete with puffed sleeves and emergency phone call quarters in the pocket and delivered her to the Wheelers'. "Behave," he told her before she jumped out of the Blazer. "And be on the lookout for anything suspicious. And, you know, have fun. But really, call the station *immediately* if anything unusual happens and Flo will find me."

"Hop," she cut him off, "I know." Because they had been through this. Repeatedly.

"I'll meet you back here tonight," he told her. Or rather, told the back of her head because she was already halfway to the Wheelers' front porch by the time the words left his mouth.

Moments after she rang the doorbell, Mike threw open the door clearly having raced to be the one to answer it. "Hi," he told her, trying not to breathe too heavily, but also once again caught off guard by the reality of her. They'd been reunited for over a year at this point and he still half expected her to disappear into thin air again so every day when he saw her, he felt a mixture of relief and disbelief.

"Hi," she replied back.

"You look really pretty," he told her in a way that would have been awkward for anyone else, but for Mike and Eleven was pure sincerity.

"Thanks."

"Michael!" Karen Wheeler appeared in the doorway behind Mike managing to look harried while simultaneously not having a single hair out of place. "Are you going to make the poor girl stand on the porch all afternoon? Where are your manners?"

"Oh, sorry."

"It's ok," Eleven smiled at him.

"Hello, El," Mrs. Wheeler greeted her once she'd stepped into the home. "Don't you look lovely. Have you ever seen a ballet before?"

"Only on TV," Eleven responded softly, still not entirely comfortable speaking to adults other than Hopper and Mrs. Byers.

"Well, you're in for a treat," Mrs. Wheeler smiled warmly at her before her attentions were drawn away. "Holly, don't mess up your dress. Nancy! We need to leave here in five minutes and I still want pictures!"

"Oh, God, Mom," Mike moaned, "you have enough pictures!"

.

.

Fifteen (not five) minutes and a small stack of Polaroids later, the

Wheeler family car finally pulled out of the driveway and headed out of town towards the highway. Nancy sat in the front seat and Mike, Eleven and Holly took up the backseat.

"What are you getting for Christmas?" Holly asked Eleven. Holly was a kindergartner now, her babyish lisp long gone and her status as a Big Girl secure. She found Eleven about as fascinating as Eleven found Nancy, though Eleven couldn't understand why. After all, Holly didn't even know about her powers.

"I don't know," El shrugged, "It's a surprise, I guess."

"I only asked Santa for two things so I know I'll get them. A Carebear and a Teddy Ruxpin," Holly ticked off the two most popular and therefore two most expensive and difficult to get toys of the year. Not that it mattered, Karen Wheeler already had them perfectly wrapped and safely stowed in the attic.

"I thought Santa—," Eleven began and Mike immediately interrupted her.

"Hey El, are you going to the Christmas parade?" Truthfully, Mike had no desire to attend the Christmas parade. It wasn't anything like the cool parades you could see on TV. Hawkins' idea of a parade was the high school marching band and local businesses sponsoring "floats" that were really just pick-up trucks with Christmas lights hanging off them. It was cold and boring, but it was also the first thing that popped into his head.

"I don't know," Eleven responded slowly not knowing if Mike was hoping she'd answer one way or the other.

"Don't say anything about Santa to Holly. I'll explain later," he whispered and Eleven nodded, but was more confused than ever.

"Mike," Holly admonished, "it's rude to interrupt."

"If Hopper's working," Mike continued, attempting to redirect the conversation, "you could come with us."

"Okay?" El responded in what sounded more like a question than an answer.



"Mike!" Holly was getting increasingly upset. *"I was talking to El!"*

"Hey Holly," Mrs. Wheeler called back from the front seat, rescuing them both, "will you help me decide which kinds of Christmas cookies we're going to make this year?"

"I want the wreath ones!" she decreed immediately, taking the focus off of Eleven and gifts from Santa.

"Sorry. My sister is kind of a pest," Mike told Eleven in hushed tones.

"That's ok," El whispered back. "Do you really want to go to a parade?"

"I was trying to change the subject, but if you want to go, we can go. It's nothing big and I've been plenty of times, but I just want you to get to do all the regular Christmas stuff you've never gotten to do before."

"Told you. I just want you for Christmas."

Mike turned a shade of red deep enough to match his Christmas sweater and hoped no one in the car was paying enough attention to overhear.

They returned later that evening and Hopper was already parked in front of the Wheeler house, waiting. "How was it?" he asked Eleven as she climbed into the Blazer.

She considered her answer before telling him, "The men didn't have any pants. But the ladies were pretty. And I didn't really understand the story."

"Yeah, that's kinda ballet in a nutshell, kid."

What she didn't tell Hopper was that none of it mattered because whatever was happening on stage was secondary to the fact that Mike held her hand the entire time. And when she leaned in to ask him what was happening, she got to rest her head an extra moment on his shoulder. So that made it perfect. Even if the men weren't wearing any pants.

.

.

Hopper tried to avoid working evenings or weekends as a general rule, particularly now that he could publicly acknowledge Eleven, but he had to at least make an appearance at the annual Police Department Christmas party on Saturday night.

"I won't be home for dinner," he told Eleven that afternoon. "I have a Christmas party at the station tonight. I can order you a pizza or something if you want."

"Pizza sounds good," she told him. She was far less resentful of his absences now that she wasn't solely reliant on him for human interaction. "And don't worry, Mike can come keep me company."

Hopper narrowed his eyes a bit, but didn't object. Not verbally anyway. "I won't be late," he thought that by being vague about his return time, perhaps he could keep the pair of them on their toes. He preferred to forget that Eleven could spy on him at will.

Mike arrived at the trailer shortly after Hopper left. He pulled a boxed gingerbread house kit from his backpack. "I brought you something I thought you'd think was fun. My mom makes her own from scratch every year and they're really elaborate. But we can just do the kit one."

"What is it?" El asked studying the pictures on the box.

"It's a little house made of gingerbread cookies that you decorate with candies. It's a Christmas tradition."

"But...why is that Christmas?"

Mike stopped and thought a moment. "I don't actually know. I never thought about it before."

They both laughed at the absurdity of it. Mike loved how easily laughter came to Eleven now, such a far cry from the terrified and traumatized girl he'd found shivering in the rain just two years ago.

They worked diligently making sure to use every bit of icing and candy that came with the kit. When they were done, they watched a Christmas special on TV waiting for Hopper to get back. Hopper found them there, the blueish flickering light of the television from one side of the room contrasting with the orange glow of Christmas tree lights from the other. Mike dozed lightly on Eleven's shoulder and she just sat, as perfectly content as he'd ever seen her.

"What did you two do tonight?" he asked, the suddenness of his voice startled Mike awake. Hopper noticed Mike had the decency to look at least somewhat guilty.

"We made a witch's house," Eleven responded causing both Mike and Hopper to stop and do a double take trying to figure out what she was talking about.

"It's not a witch's house," Mike began to explain.

"Yes, it is," Eleven insisted and when neither Mike nor Hopper gave her any indication of understanding, she elaborated. "The witch in the woods? Who tries to burn the boy? Because he and the sister ate her house after the father tried to starve them?"

It took Hopper another beat before it registered. "Hansel and Gretel," he surmised. "Your gingerbread house is the house from Hansel and Gretel."

"Who else has a cookie house?" El asked, surprised Mike and Hopper didn't know this already. You'd think they were the ones who grew up in a lab without access to fairy tales.

"C'mon Mike," Hopper told him, "I'll take you home. It's too late to ride your bike."

.

.

When Eleven envisioned going to school and getting to live a normal life, she never once thought about final exams.

"Why have so many tests all at once?" she asked Mike during their

shared study hall. They'd set their schedules up so that he be Eleven's peer tutor which would give them a relatively unstructured hour each day to spend together in the school library. It was actually helpful for Eleven, but it was also a chance for them to hang out together.

"I don't know, it's just the way it is," he told her with a shrug. "It helps to have something to look forward to."

"Like what?"

"Well," Mike paused thinking. "Your last final is on Friday and the Christmas parade is that Saturday. Did you decide if you wanted to go?"

"Yes," Eleven decided. "I want to see the parade at least once."

As it turned out, Hopper was indeed working the night of the annual Christmas parade. Nearly the entire police department was because even though it was a small town, it was also a small department and extra officers had to be on duty to direct traffic around the parade route. Parking was a mess, so Hopper dropped all six kids off at the parade staging area with strict instructions to meet back there at 9:00 pm on the dot.

"Where are we watching from?" Will asked, surveying the available options.

"I vote we get close to the food stands," Dustin volunteered.

"Of course you do," Lucas teased.

"That's where it's the most crowded," Mike complained.

"It's crowded everywhere," Dustin countered.

"Hey, did any of you notice that fire escape?" Max had been ignoring the banter and surveying the metal ladder attached to the side of a darkened office building in the narrow alley off the parade route.

"You're not seriously suggesting we sneak on top of a building," Dustin asked.

"The sidewalks are already filling up," Max reasoned, "so if you want to be able to see anything, then yes, that's exactly what I'm suggesting. Come on, no one will see us."

"I could pull the ladder down," Eleven suggested, happy to escape the crowds.

"See?" Max told the boys, "It's a perfect plan. It's like being Santa."

"You realize if we get caught, I'm going to get blamed," Mike told Eleven once again envisioning a lifetime of getting pulled into ill advised plans and once again, not even a little bit sorry about it.

"No you won't. If we get caught, I'll tell Hopper it was my idea and you tried to stop me."

"But we're not going to get caught," Max was confident in her delinquency. "So stop worrying."

Eleven quietly pulled the fire escape ladder down to street level and one by one, the kids climbed up to the top of the building. When they were all on the roof, she inconspicuously pulled the ladder back up, concealing their trespass.

"See?" Max told them. "Now we get a bird's eye view of this thing. Just don't get too near to the edge."

Once the parade started, it really was the perfect vantage point. Except that there was no easy way to get down to the food stands. "Next year, we have to plan ahead," Dustin announced, having already accepted that this was going to be a new party tradition.

They watched the parade progress below them complete with pick-up trucks decked out in Christmas lights and the high school marching band. It was campy and not anything impressive like the parades you could see on TV, including the one in New York that Hopper promised to take her to one day. But no other parade in the world could compare to this one. Because though it was simple, it was theirs to enjoy together. Mike sat with his knees bent and Eleven sat between them leaning on Mike's chest. He was now tall enough that his chin tucked neatly over her shoulder, though not yet her head.

"Comfortable?" he asked, the warmth of his breath hit her ear as he wrapped his arms around her middle.

"Yes," she told him, because even though her butt was near numb from cold, she would have been perfectly happy to never move again.

"Mike?" She asked in a small voice that only he was close enough to hear.

"Yeah?"

"We can do this next year too, right?"

"Oh yeah, I think trespassing is a great Christmas tradition. We definitely need to make this an annual thing."

She could hear, but not see the smile in his voice. Whatever other insanity they had to deal with, and some part of her knew that there would always be something, there would also always be Christmas. And there would always be Mike. And friends. And a family of her own making.

And that was enough for her.